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Frontier Settlement and Market Revolution: the Holland Land Purchase/The Agricultural Transition in New York State: Markets and Migration in Mid-Nineteenth Century America

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The book is well written and thorough. Carr begins her town histories with the Native Americans and provides comprehensive overviews of topics such as surveying procedures and separate spheres. There are occasional interesting anecdotes, but few people emerge as interesting personalities, and then only fleetingly. In fact, the numerous informative tables in the appendix demonstrate one difference between this book and many other community studies. Carr provides information on population growth, nativity, and occupations, but the book often stays on a general level. The statistics, in the appendixes and as cited in the text, give readers an overview of the composition of the town, its structure, and patterns of activity, but few individuals and personalities emerge for very long from these overviews. One does not come away feeling that one knows Belleville or another of these towns because one has followed the lives of various families in that town over a generation or more. Rather, one knows the occupations of Prussian or Hessian residents in Belleville and their place in the class hierarchy of the town. Readers will know the town's structure but not its life.

In her conclusion, Carr sets out a typology for the study of frontier communities. She emphasizes the need to study towns' links to regional and national systems, their ethnic and religious heterogeneity or lack thereof, and the "political, economic, and cultural factionalism or cohesiveness" among their elites (144). Although the book contains little of direct relevance to those interested in Iowa history, it may serve as a useful road map to those doing similar studies of other midwestern communities.

Frontier Settlement and Market Revolution: The Holland Land Purchase, by Charles E. Brooks. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996. x, 239 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, index. \$42.50 cloth.

The Agricultural Transition in New York State: Markets and Migration in Mid-Nineteenth Century America, by Donald H. Parkerson. Henry A. Wallace Series on Agricultural History and Rural Life. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995. xii, 196 pp. Illustrations, figures, tables, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MARGARET BEATTIE BOGUE, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

In *Frontier Settlement and Market Revolution*, Charles E. Brooks reinterprets a familiar chapter in the history of frontier western New York, the experience of pioneer farmer settlers and their company landlords as they developed the Holland Land Company's 3.3 million acres.

Drawing heavily on microfilmed company archives and other manuscript and printed sources, the author has created a richly detailed account of the ups and downs in settler-company relationships, placing them in context with recent interpretations of the market revolution, rural culture, subsistence and commercial farming, and ecological change.

Dutch bankers acquired the land in 1792 from Richard Morris, organized the company in 1796, and offered lands on contract to incoming settlers, especially encouraging family farmer-settlers. At first lenient toward purchasers in view of the difficult tasks of frontier farm making, the company shifted to a stricter payment policy once debts on land contracts mounted in the 1820s, urging farmers to produce more, especially more wheat for market, a dubious solution in view of low prices and primitive transportation facilities. Farmer buyers, keenly conscious of the value of their labor in a land/labor ratio that made labor dear and the key to independent home ownership and freedom, envisioned a different model of economic development, a small producer economy with limited production for market. The seriousness of farmer debt problems and the aspirations of town and country elites both eager for prosperity once the Erie Canal opened, plunged the Holland Land Company into the political arena in 1827 with the launching of agrarian conventions as a forum for airing grievances. The final 80 pages of the book give a galvanizing account of the increasingly tense, complex, and politicized chain of events that finally led the company to sell its holdings in 1835 to local developers who turned out to be tougher on delinquents than the Holland Land Company. Their actions provoked the destruction of one land office by an angry mob in February 1837 and armed confrontations between law enforcement officers and farmers who joined to defend a few delinquents selected for eviction to teach others a lesson.

The conflict between the small-producer, "agrarian" model and the large company, "capitalist" model for development serves as the central theme of Brooks's study. It is ingeniously and lucidly elaborated against the broad backdrop of the land/labor ratio which dictated reality to company and farmer-settler alike, giving settlers protection against potential landlord dominance, determining how they used resources, fostering a labor-added theory of land values, and encouraging negotiation and compromise. This analysis relies on a very special and limited definition of what is "capitalist," that is, simply the Holland Land Company, and what is "agrarian," meaning farmer-settlers interested in acquiring home farms and support for their families and less involved in the commercial market. By no means uniform, the agrarians' ideas are hard to determine, and the degree of their subsistence

is difficult to track and document. The author takes issue with Avery Craven; similarly, he faults William Cronon, Donald Worster, and Timothy Silver for failing to understand "the settlers' aspirations and how they used the land." Brooks deserves high praise for this stimulating new study of the Holland Land Purchase, which carries its history well beyond earlier treatments. All interested in settlement and farm making in newly developing areas will find it provocative and useful.

In *The Agricultural Transition in New York State*, Donald H. Parkerson examines the complex process of change to predominantly commercial agriculture, meaning an economy wherein the majority of farmers produce a marketable surplus, a transformation dating from the late 1830s to about 1870. Skillfully and methodically analyzing the data recorded for several thousand farmers in the New York State agricultural and population census schedules for 1855 and 1865, he develops a definition for semisubsistence yeoman and commercial farmers based on caloric production and consumption per farm. Applying quantification techniques to the census data, and relying on a broad variety of original and printed materials reflecting the experience of the farm families, he proceeds by clear definitions and analysis to produce evidence to sustain the connections between migration patterns, the growth of commercial farming, changes in family structure, and a rising farm consumption of factory-produced goods.

Parkerson introduces the key ingredients of agricultural transition in his first chapter and then considers each element before weaving them together. In "The Countryside in Motion," he presents evidence of the high degree of mobility in rural New York, a characteristic of society hard to document, but aided immeasurably by the state census, which recorded "continuous years of residence." He found that rural mobility was just as widespread or even more so than urban. The yeomen, 45 percent of farmers in 1855, often did not produce enough food for their families. Both men and women developed a whole series of strategies to make up the deficiencies. Surplus market farmers grew in numbers and in strength in the decade 1855-1865. In the latter year, two out of three farmers produced a surplus compared, to roughly 55 percent a decade earlier, and they were wealthier. With that growth Parkerson detects greater consumption of factory-made goods and the beginning of a shift in gender roles, with less of women's work involving production and more centering on care of home and children. He found that mobility played a key role in the commercial farmer's success, and in the upward mobility of semisubsistence yeomen. He stresses the importance of a changed family/household structure, which came to include migrating adult relatives and hired persons as

a key ingredient in agricultural transition. Nor has he neglected the role of the agricultural press and the changes in farm productivity through greater yields per acre, an expansion in cultivated lands, and the shift toward more livestock, especially dairy cattle.

Parkerson's study is important as a contribution to nineteenth-century American agricultural history and as a fresh, well-documented insight into varied aspects of rural life. Clear and straightforward in expression, the work maintains a good balance between quantification and the literary record. The concept of different types of market ecologies—the dynamic type, viable, and flourishing; the stable, in a state of economic equilibrium; and the marginal, characterized by emerging markets and changing opportunities—is an especially useful analytical tool to differentiate population mobility, market structures, and farming patterns in different geographic areas of the state. Parkerson takes care to place his findings in context with the work of others and to review such controversies as the causes and influence of population mobility, the usefulness of farm children as workers, and the level of market participation that makes one a commercial farmer rather than a semisubsistence yeoman. The study offers important insights into the complexities and dynamics of the transition to commercial agriculture that significantly broaden the current understanding of that process.

Dutch Farmer in the Missouri Valley: The Life and Letters of Ulbe Eringa, 1866–1950, by Brian W. Beltman. Statue of Liberty–Ellis Island Centennial Series. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996. xv, 284 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, index. \$27.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY FRANKLIN YODER, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Ulbe Eringa left his boyhood home in the northern Dutch province of Friesland in 1892, moved to America, and eventually settled in Bon Homme County, South Dakota, where he was a farmer, family patriarch, and church elder. The letters and reminiscences he wrote to relatives in the Netherlands during his fifty-eight years in America offer an intimate look at life in the Midwest during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Eringa's letters are not published simply as reprinted translations. Brian Beltman, a grandson of Ulbe Eringa, analyzes the letters within the debate over immigrant culture, adaptation, and change. Beltman does not make dramatic claims for the importance of his grandfather's letters, but offers the writings as "another piece in the ethnic mosaic that comprises so much of the nation's history" (8).

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